



Michael Kell (senior) shows Peter Bryant (freshman) how to do “The Brisket Spritz.”

May Our Prayer Be Set Before You... As Smoking Brisket?

by MICHAEL KELL, Senior, major in Nutrition, Tailgate Tuesday Quartermaster Intern

Who would have thought that smoking brisket, and everything that unfolded around LuMin’s smoker, would end up being the greatest blessing of my Easter this year?

It feels fair to say that our “Holy Smoker” group at LuMin has officially been formed. That became clear during our latest experience: holding an Easter Vigil while smoking brisket for LuMin’s third Ecumenical Sunday Evening Dinner church.

Pastor Brad, Peter Bryant, and I spent a full Saturday tending a few briskets. Pastor Brad had the idea that while the meat smoked, we would read twelve stories from Scripture that tell the story of God’s salvation. And so that’s what we did. Pausing regularly for brief moments of Word and prayer made the hours pass quickly and meaningfully.

What stood out even more, though, were the interactions we had along the way, especially on a cold and rainy Saturday. We shared pizza with an

unhoused neighbor, talked with rugby players passing by, and had some of our most thoughtful conversations with Roman Catholic siblings.

We spoke honestly about our differences, but also about the deep similarities we share, especially around the Eucharist. We even found ourselves turning to Scripture to affirm God’s love for queer people and the truth that all are made in His image.

Stepping outside the walls of LuMin to cook meat reminded me, much like Tailgate Tuesdays, how important it is to bring what we do into the community. The world is

still open to holy conversations. People are still hungry, not just for food, but for connection, meaning, and grace.

In the end, what I thought was the main event, smoking brisket, became secondary. God used it as the setting, not the focus. What mattered most were the encounters, the conversations, and the ways God brought people together in unexpected and meaningful ways.

“The world is still open to holy conversations. People are still hungry, not just for food, but for connection, meaning, and grace.”

The Living Water That Feeds Us

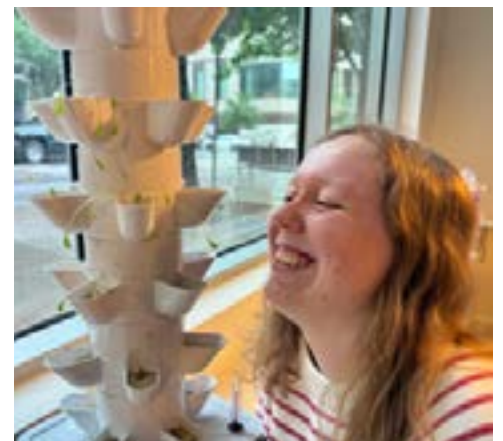
- by VIRGINIA VANICEK - Senior, double major in Astronomy & Physics, Carl & Claudia Tienert Social Justice Intern,

For my entire life, my faith has been deeply intertwined with nature and the great expansion of the universe that God created. As the social justice intern at LuMin, I have centered my efforts around our communion with the Earth and all life upon it. Last semester, this included going out into God’s creation where LuMin participated in UT’s “The Project” and picked up trash at a local park. This semester, I wanted to bring God’s creation into our space and give our students the ownership of taking care of it.

LuMin’s Daily Bread food pantry is dedicated to providing food for students in need and specializes in providing nutritious and delicious food to its patrons. To aid the food pantry in its effort, we decided to begin the process of growing our own vegetables and herbs in our space so students would have access to fresh lettuce, spinach, cilantro, dill, and so on.

The new hydroponics systems have added a lot to our space, and I imagine more to come. For 15 minutes every hour, the water pumps of the hydroponics turn on and the sound of water fills the room – turning the room into a place of meditation with moving water. In addition, each time LuMin students enter the space, they can notice how the plants have grown since the last time they were there.

For me, both of these additions to LuMin’s space have created another level of meditation and prayer. The sound of the moving water reminds me of the living water of the Holy Spirit that surrounds us; the growth of the plants reminds me of how God nurtures us to grow in our faith and work in fruitful efforts toward others. My hope is that this new ministry feeds both our Daily Bread patrons and the life of our students at LuMin.



If Once We Don't Succeed...

- by **SYDNEY NGUYEN**- Sophomore, double major in majoring in Biology and Nutrition, Kay & Loren Jensen Daily Bread Intern, , and **VIVIAN ZHANG**, Junior, next year's Brekhus Community Life Intern,

My second semester serving as the Jensen Daily Bread Food Pantry Intern at the food pantry has taught me how much effort it takes to turn a good idea into something that actually works.

Earlier in the semester, our food pantry attempted to host a community-building meal for our clients. The majority of our pantry clients are international students with the majority of them coming to UT from India.

We have been wanting to create something that helps them to feel connected. And what better way to do that than to invite them in to enjoy a home cooked meal?! Like, a home-cooked meal that comes from their home country of India!

Our first attempt honestly did not go well. Very few people showed up. Our kidney beans hadn't been properly soaked which pushed back the meal we had planned. And also our clients were late. All this did NOT lead to the connection we'd envisioned. At the time, we felt so discouraged. We learned that strong ideas will fail if timing and coordination aren't realistic. Also, planning matters just as much as intention.

Our second attempt at the community meal took all of this into account. We bumped up our collaboration and go figure: we were much more successful. Student volunteers from the Natural Sciences Council, a student organization that I, Vivian, help lead, prepared toor dal the night before during Tailgate Tuesday. That following Wednesday evening before the pantry opened, we ended up serving over 20 people.

Students began arriving about 30 minutes before the pantry opened, which gave them time to sit in the LuMin lounge, relax, and talk with one another. What stood out most was the level of interaction—people were not only talking with us but also engaging with each other for a solid 15 minutes, creating a much stronger sense of community.

Many attendees complimented the food, shared ideas and recipe suggestions for future Daily Bread community meals, and several even took extra portions home for later. Even though turnout wasn't huge, the overall atmosphere felt welcoming, engaging, and meaningful, showing how small adjustments can lead to a much more positive outcome.



Vivian (second to left) with her fellow Natural Science Council Volunteers making the 1st Community meal!

Led from Loneliness to Gratefully Leading



- by **MADI CHANDLER** - Sophomore, double major in Sociology and Psychology, Kent & Joan Bohls Donor Care Intern.

My freshman year didn't start out exactly how I expected. I had a few friends who were supposed to go to UT with me, but that didn't end up working out. I found myself super unhappy and alone at the school that I was so excited to be at. That experience turned me away from God because I didn't understand how or why God would allow me to experience such loneliness.

Toward the end of fall semester, I decided to try out a LuMin worship service. I went with Isabella and she introduced me to everyone. The students involved with LuMin were so kind and welcoming. I was drawn to LuMin's tight knit community of college students.

I grew up in a small church that only had adults, so LuMin was very different from the church I grew up in. The sermons felt tailored to my life as a college student. I finally found a place where I could

have conversations about God with peers who understood what I was going through.

I became a LuMin regular in the spring semester of my freshman year and since joining LuMin, I feel like God has provided me a place where I belong at UT. I have been serving LuMin as the Bohls Donor care intern. In that role, I've been able to express myself creatively through my writing and teach others the importance of writing a meaningful expression of gratitude.

Serving as the "gratitude czar" - as Pr. Brad puts it - has helped me take the steps necessary to become a leader and work toward developing my own leadership style. As LuMin's gratitude leader, I'm grateful to God and glad that I was led to take a chance and attend a worship service at LuMin last fall. LuMin truly feels like my home away from home.

Connection Through Devotion

- by **AUBREY CLAYTON** - Senior, LuMin Wellness Intern, double major in Psychology and Religious Studies

For the spring 2026 semester at LuMin, I was tasked with creating a community devotional for the season of Lent. The season of Lent is a personal anniversary in my own faith, and I was excited to share that passion for the season with my community through the theme of the 12 Steps of AA/NA/Recovery. I assumed the devotional would be a large task, but I was willing to pour into it for the purpose of helping our congregation become more enveloped by Lent and all that comes with it.

To my surprise, the devotional was anything but an individual effort. I put out a call for devotional authors and was shocked with the amount of volunteers, curiosity, and support the community at large had for this project. Current students and alumni were willing to give up their time to go out of their way to help me.

The authors of these devotionals did more than just sign up; they were all as vulnerable, thoughtful, and passionate about this project as I was. Through this effort, I was blessed with the opportunity to get to know others better by collecting their writing.

I was able to better understand my fellow interns and their relationships with Christ as well as alumni whom I've never met face to face. Something I've always appreciated about the church is the history and traditions that come with an institution cared for by generations. Church, like this devotional series, is a group project that continues because it has been loved by so many.

I have been so grateful this semester to do work that is such a clear representation of the long time impact of LuMin only possible through the Spirit that resides in and connects us all.



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